

GUEST COLUMN

Mitch Henck: Trump needs a makeover to succeed

June 19, 2016

Friend of Donald Trump and proud Richard Nixon dirty trickster Roger Stone said on my radio show that “Donald Trump is bigger than the Republican Party.”

Trump can only hope. Based on this week’s Marquette Law School poll of registered Wisconsin voters, it looks bleak for The Donald.

The best part for Trump is he only trails by 7 percentage points to Hillary Clinton and by 9 points among likely voters. And 666 of the 800 people surveyed are in the “likely” column.

Since Trump faces 35 percent disapproval among Republicans and 18 percent of Republicans say they won’t vote for him, he better go outside the GOP to have a chance of being elected president. That’s assuming the rest of the battleground states are anything close to Wisconsin.

In the Marquette poll, seven of 10 voters say they are uncomfortable with Trump as president. Trumpites such as Roger Stone point to Trump attracting millions of new Primary voters and gathering more votes than any Republican in history.

But Marquette pollster Charles Franklin says that while those voters were new to primaries, they weren’t new to November elections.

“There is no data to suggest that there will be a substantial number of first-time general election voters showing up for Trump,” Franklin says. He adds it is reasonable to expect some first-time voters for Trump, but only in the 1 to 3 percent range.

Another sign that the iceberg may have hit the Trumphantic is that 56 percent of those polled say Hillary Clinton is qualified to be president. And 30 percent feel that way about Trump. So why is the race still close?

The answer is Clinton. Just 13 percent of Democrats in the poll say they won’t vote for Hillary. But 32 percent in the poll say Trump is honest, compared to 28 percent who say the former secretary of state is honest.

Clinton also has a 66 percent unfavorable rating with men, 66 percent unfavorable with independents, and 62 percent unfavorable with rural voters.

And there's more. The poll suggested 41 percent of voters surveyed call themselves independent, while 25 percent of those voters say they won't vote for Trump or Clinton. The poll also found 10 percent of independents say they don't know yet for whom to vote.

"The question for Trump is that, because Clinton's ratings are so negative, can he persuade voters to come to him that say 'no' currently," Franklin says.

That is an uphill battle for The Trumpster in Wisconsin. The New York businessman is viewed unfavorably by 71 percent of women, 73 percent of college grads, 65 percent of suburban voters and 66 percent of moderates.

Yeah, but aside from that, supporters of Democratic hanger-on Bernie Sanders give Clinton some work to do. Two-thirds of Sanders voters say they will vote for Clinton, 24 percent say they'll vote for neither likely major party nominee, and 4 percent say they will vote for Trump.

So don't be surprised if both sides dump massive amounts of negative if not sleazy material on each other from now until November to suppress each other's vote.

On that front, Clinton has a head start. In March, 87 percent of Republicans said they would vote in November. That number is down to 78 percent now. Franklin says the drop in the projected GOP turnout is precisely why Democratic U.S. Senate candidate Russ Feingold leads incumbent Sen. Ron Johnson, R-Oshkosh, by 9 percentage points among likely voters.

Trump may need a makeover at the Republican convention to attract conservatives and independents who dislike what they see. Otherwise, down-ballot candidates such as Johnson may go down with the ship.

Mitch is a Madison, Wisconsin based commentator, broadcaster and standup comic. The Mitch Henck Show is broadcast live 8-11a.m. Monday-Friday at www.mitchhenck.com. and on 92.1FM, The Mic in Madison. Contact Mitch at: mitch@mitchhenck.com